Appl. No. 09/816,640
Amdt. sent May 11, 2005
Reply to Office Action of November 16, 2004

PATENT

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1-6.   (Canceled)

7.   (Previously presented):  In a relational database, a method for accessing information in accordance with an access policy, said method comprising:

providing a SELECT statement, said SELECT statement having a select clause comprising one or more column references, each column reference identifying a specific column in said relational database;

replacing at least one of said one or more column references with a mask function to produce a modified query having modified column references from which columns in a query result are selected, said modified columns being determined based on said access policy; and

producing a query result in response to said modified query, said query result comprising one or more rows of information, each row comprising data selected from columns identified by said modified column references.

8.   (Previously presented):  The method of claim 7 wherein said at least one query further comprises a WHERE clause.

9.   (Previously presented):  The method of claim 7 wherein said relational database is provided in a database server; said step of providing includes receiving said at least one query at a client system; and said step of producing includes transmitting said modified query to said database server.

10.   (Original):  The method of claim 9 wherein said step of replacing is performed at said client system.

1         11.     (Original):  The method of claim 9 wherein said step of replacing is

2    performed at said database server.

         12 - 20.        (Canceled)

1         21.     (Currently amended):  In a relational database, an access method

2    comprising:

3                 receiving a database query to access at least one table in said relational database,

4    said database query statement comprising a SELECT clause and a FROM clause, said SELECT

5    clause ~~identifying~~ comprising one or more ~~first~~ columns references, said FROM clause

6    identifying a table that comprises columns identified by said one or more columns references;

7                 replacing one or more of said ~~first~~ columns references with mask functions to

8    produce a modified database query statement; and

9                 producing a query result based on said modified database query statement.

1         22.     (Previously presented):  The method of claim 21 wherein said database

2    query further comprises a WHERE clause, wherein said replacing does not change said WHERE

3    clause.

1         23.     (Previously presented):  The method of claim 21 wherein said relational

2    database is provided in a database server, wherein said receiving is performed at a client system.

1         24.     (Previously presented):  The method of claim 23 wherein said replacing is

2    performed at said client system.

1         25.     (Previously presented):  The method of claim 23 wherein said replacing is

2    performed at said database server.

1         26.     (Previously presented):  The method of claim 23 wherein said replacing is

2    performed in accordance with an access policy.

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1        27.    (Previously presented):  A computer-based information retrieval system

2  comprising:

3        a relational database comprising one or more tables;

4        a first computer system operative to access said relational database,

5        said first computer system further operative to:

6        receive a database query comprising a SELECT clause and a FROM

7  clause, said SELECT clause comprising one or more column references; and

8        replace one or more of said column references with mask functions to

9  produce a modified database query,

10        wherein said relational database is accessed in accordance with said modified

11  database query to produce a query result.

1        28.    (Previously presented):  The computer-based information retrieval system

2  of claim 27 further comprising a second computer system, wherein said first computer system is

3  further operative to transmit said modified database query to said second computer system,

4  wherein said second computer system is operative to access said relational database, said second

5  computer system thereby producing said query result.

1        29.    (Previously presented):  The computer-based information retrieval system

2  of claim 28 wherein said first computer is a client system and said second computer system is a

3  database server system.

1        30.    (Previously presented):  The computer-based information retrieval system

2  of claim 28 wherein said first computer system is in data communication with said relational

3  database to produce said query result in accordance with said modified database query.

1        31.    (Previously presented):  The computer-based information retrieval system

2  of claim 27 wherein said database query further comprises a WHERE clause.